

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 CCO-00 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /011 R

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O: L. MATTESON

APPROVED BY: S/S-O: L. MATTESON

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O 032248Z NOV 74 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 242007

TOSEC 643

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 6546 SENT SECSTATE INFO ABU DHABI
BEIRUT CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA TEL AVIV KUWAIT RABAT TUNIS
TRIPOLI JERUSALEM ALGIERS GENEVA DATED NOV 3.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 6546

DEPT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, JO, XO

SUBJ: LOCAL REACTIONS TO RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS

1. SUMMARY: BASED ON LIMITED EMBASSY SAMPLE OF LOCAL CONTACTS,
MOST JORDANIANS APPEAR RELIEVED OVER OUTCOME OF RABAT SUMMIT.
THEY GREET RABAT AS WATERSHED, WITH PLO, NOT JORDAN, HENCEFORTH
RESPONSIBLE FOR FRUSTRATING WEST BANK PROBLEM. INITIAL GOJ DIS-
APPOINTMENT AT RABAT "SELL-OUT" SUCCEEDED BY AT LEAST LIP
SERVICE OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR RECOGNIZING PLO. EAST BANKERS REL-
IEVED THAT JORDAN HAS WASHED HANDS OF WEST BANK; MORE EXTREME
EAST BANKERS INCLUDING SOME ARMY INCLINED TO FORCE PALESTINIANS
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TO CHOOSE ON QUESTION OF JORDANIAN OR PALESTINIAN CITIZENSHIP

BUT KING HAS PUT BRAKES ON HARD-LINE SENTIMENTS. MOST PALESTINIAN PREOCCUPIED WITH CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS BUT FEW SEEM INTERESTED IN OPTING TO RETURN TO WEST BANK AT THIS TIME. SOME UNHAPPINESS THAT KING DID NOT CONSULT PARLIAMENT BEFORE GIVING IN TO PLO. ALSO SKEPTICISM THAT \$300 MILLION AID WILL ALL GO TO MILITARY OR INTO POCKETS OF RICH. MOST JORDANIANS THINK U.S. HAD ALREADY TILTED IN FAVOR OF PLO ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS AND NOW SEE ISRAEL AS OBLIGED TO NEGOTIATE WITH PLO OR RISK WAR WITH ALL ARABS. END SUMMARY.

2. OFFICIAL REACTION: INITIAL JORDANIAN OFFICIAL REACTION TO RABAT DECISION WAS EXTREME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT JORDAN RECEIVED NO SUPPORT FROM ARAB STATES ON WEST BANK ISSUE. GOJ OFFICIALDOM AND KING HAVE NOW PUT "BEST FACE" ON FAIT ACCOMPLI: BANNERS STRUNG ALONG AMMAN STREETS STILL WELCOME BACK HUSSEIN "FROM HIS JORDANIAN FAMILY," AND GOJ MOUTHPIECES (SUCH AS PALACE CHIEF BAHJAT TALHOUNI) IN NEWSPAPER INTERVIEWS PRAISE PERSPICACITY OF KING'S DECISION. CURRENT GOJ STRESS IS ON MAGNANIMITY TOWARD PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS, AS CHARACTERIZED BY KING'S OCTOBER 30 SPEECH AND ON SUPPRESSING PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF ANY ANTI-PALESTINIAN SENTIMENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, GOJ CONFISCATED COPIES OF WEEKLY AL-LIWA CONTAINING ANTI-PALESTINIAN EDITORIAL AND AT CROWN PRINCE'S ORDER CANCELLED A LARGE RECEPTION WHICH EAST BANKERS WERE PLANNING UPON KING'S RETURN.

3. EAST BANK "JORDANIAN" RESPONSE: EAST BANKERS EXPRESS VIRTUALLY UNIVERSAL SATISFACTION AT RABAT DECISION, WHICH MOST RESIDENTS INTERPRET AS JORDAN TURNING OVER ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WEST BANK TO PLO. PREVAILING OPINION IS THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PALESTINE HAS FINALLY BEEN PUT WHERE IT BELONGS, I.E. WITH THE PALESTINIANS FOR WHICH, LIKE IT OR NOT, PLO APPEARS ONLY VIABLE REPRESENTATIVE. THEY SEE JORDAN RELIEVED OF TERRIBLE BURDEN AND DO NOT GENERALLY CONSIDER SHORT-TERM ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS FOR MIDEAST PEACE. HOWEVER, SOME YOUNGER, WESTERN-ORIENTED JORDANIANS REGRET KING'S NOT CONSULTING "THE PEOPLE" VIA CONVENING PARLIAMENT BEFORE OR AFTER CEDING WEST BANK. HARDLINE ARMY AND TRIBAL TYPES CAN BARELY RESTRAIN GLEE AT BEING RID OF WEST BANK AND, BY IMPLICATION, LOCAL PALESTINIANS; UNDERTONE IS ALSO PRESENT THAT "NOW THE KING HAD BETTER SHAPE UP" RE PURGING DIWAN OF NON-EAST BANKERS. HARD-LINERS DISMAYED BY KING'S SUGGESTION IN SPEECH THAT

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SUBSIDIES TO WEST BANK WILL CONTINUE AND RESENT FACT THAT "JORDANIANS" ONLY MENTIONED BRIEFLY IN SPEECH; "HOW CAN THE KING CITE HIS PALESTINIAN BROTHERS AND HIS SAUDI FOREFATHERS WITHOUT MENTIONING HIS OWN PEOPLE?"

4. PALESTINIAN REACTION: LOCAL PALESTINIANS PREOCCUPIED BY FEAR OF EAST BANK BACKLASH, ALTHOUGH KING'S SPEECH WENT FAR TOWARD CALMING SUSPICIONS. APPREHENSION PREVALENT PARTICULARLY AMONG

THE APPROX 200,000 CAMPDWELLERS WHO TRADITIONALLY PRONE TO OVER-REACTIONS. RUMORS CURRENTLY CIRCULATING THERE OF IMMINENT CLOSURE OF CAMPS, ALTHOUGH ASSUMPTION IS THAT INHABITANTS WOULD HAVE TO FIND HOUSING IN JORDAN RATHER THAN FORCIBLE EVICTION TO WEST BANK. LAND AND RENT PRICES EXPECTED TO RISE, PARTICULARLY SINCE ASSUMPTION BY PALESTINIANS IS THAT WHATEVER REMAINS OF \$300 MILLION ANNUAL SUBSIDY WILL STRAIN ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF JORDANIAN ECONOMY. YOUNG HOTHEAD CAMP DWELLERS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ELATED BY PLO REPRESENTATION, BUT POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED PALESTINIANS, SUCH AS UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, ARE CONCERNED BY PRACTICAL RAMIFICATIONS. EVEN SOPHISTICATED PALESTINIANS WHO READILY ADMIT TO DESPISING KING HUSSEIN AT LEAST SAW HIM AS SOLE CHANCE TO RECOVER WEST BANK. THESE SOPHISTICATED PALESTINIANS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH PROPERTY IN FORMER WEST BANK ARE ONLY PUBLIC OPINION GROUP SHARING TOP LEVEL OFFICIAL GLOOM OVER BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS PROSPECTS OVER WEST BANK. INFORMAL POLL BY UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN PROFESSOR OF 21 PALESTINIAN CONTACTS IN ITTELLIGENTSIA FOUND NOT ONE PRESENTLY WILLING TO RETURN TO A WEST BANK UNDER PLO RULE, BUT THAT ALL OBJECTED TO POSSIBILITY OF BEING FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN JORDANIAN AND PALESTINIAN NATIONALITY AT THIS TIME. SOME EDUCATED PALESTINIANS OBJECT TO FACT THAT YASIR ARAFAT HAS BEEN DECREED LEADER OF THEIR PEOPLE WITHOUT THIS HAVING BEEN PUT TO SOME SORT OF POLL (PRESUMABLY TO HAVE BEEN HELD IN ALL ARAB COUNTRIES).

5. IN ABSENCE REAL OPTION TO RETURN, IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHAT PERCENTAGE OF 800,000 PALESTINIANS MIGHT RETURN TO FUTURE WEST BANK STATE. AS USUAL, PALESTINIANS WILL ADOPT WATCH-AND-WAIT ATTITUDE. (INDEED, SOME PROSPEROUS LOCAL PALESTINIANS WOULD HEAD EAST SHOULD "1970 THUGS" POUR INTO AREA).

6. REACTION TO U.S.: OFFICIAL JORDANIANS ARE DISAPPOINTED WITH RABAT DECISION AND SOME BLAME US FOR NOT PREVENTING IT. IN FACT, CONFIDENTIAL

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RUMORS ARE RIFE THAT U.S. HAD MADE DECISION TO TILT TOWARDS PLO PRIOR TO RABAT AND PRESIDENT FORD'S OCT 28 STATEMENT, IS ADDUCED AS EVIDENCE. STORY CIRCULATING, ORIGINATING WITH MEMBER OF OFFICIAL DELEGATION, THAT ALGERIANS SAID KISSINGER TOLD BOUMEDIENNE THAT USG WOULD SUPPORT A PLO ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL IF THAT WAS ARAB DECISION. IN ESSENCE, GENERAL VIEW IS THAT DECISIVE WATERSHED HAS OCCURRED IN MIDEAST WITH PLO REPLACING JORDAN ON WEST BANK. MOST JORDANIANS IGNORE SHORT-TERM TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTORS. CONVICTION EXISTS AMONG SURPRISINGLY LARGE SEGMENT OF PALESTINIANS AND EAST BANKERS THAT ISRAELI THREATS NEVER TO NEGOTIATE WITH PLO ARE SO MUCH HOT AIR, AND THAT US PRESSURE WILL INEVITABLY INDUCE THEM TO TALK.

7. COMMENT: IN GENERAL GOJ HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE, CHIEFLY THROUGH

KING'S SPEECH, IN DEFUSING POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PUBLIC REACTION TO CONFUSING DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS OF RABAT SUMMIT. WE WOULD CAUTION AGAINST EXAGGERATING POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF LOCAL REACTION GIVEN 1) LIMITED BASE OF EMBASSY SAMPLE; 2) FACT THAT KING GENERALLY LEADS RATHER THAN FOLLOWS PUBLIC OPINION, AND 3) FACT THAT OPINIONS ENDORSING PLO IN FACT NOW ENCOURAGED BY GOJ POLICY SWITCH. NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE SURPRISED WITH NEAR-UNANIMITY OF ACCLAIM FOR JORDANIAN ABANDONMENT OF WEST BANK ROLE AND RELIEF THAT PLO NOW HAS THE PROBLEM. HOWEVER PRELIMINARY AND SUPERFICIAL, THIS REACTION, IT SHOULD LIMIT THE GOJ'S MANEUVERABILITY IN MIDEAST NEGOTIATIONS IN COMING MONTHS. WE ALSO FIND SOME DISENCHANTMENT WITH U.S. FOLLOWING RABAT SUMMIT, DESPITE WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY OVER U.S. SUPPORT FOR JORDANIAN NEGOTIATING ROLE. WHILE THERE IS NO ARTICULATED ANTI-U.S. CAMPAIGN, FEELING IS THAT SUMMIT HAS TAKEN WIND OUT OF SAILS OF U.S. MIDEAST DIPLOMACY AND PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT TO NEW SITUATION IS REQUIRED. PICKERING UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, PALESTINIANS, WEST BANK, SUMMIT MEETINGS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE242007
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O: L. MATTESON
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740315-0355
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741175/aaaacty.tel
Line Count: 186
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <21 MAR 2003 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOCAL REACTIONS TO RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, JO, XO
To: BUCHAREST
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005